

Town Council Minutes  
Morehead City, North Carolina

Friday, February 6, 2015 at 10:00 a.m.  
Special Meeting/Council Retreat

The Honorable Council of the Town of Morehead City met in a Special Meeting/Retreat on Friday, February 6, 2015, in the Council Chambers, Morehead City Municipal Building, 202 South 8<sup>th</sup> Street, Morehead City, North Carolina. The purpose of the Special Meeting/Retreat was a review of the Morehead City Police Department, Fire/EMS, Webb Library and Stormwater Management. Those in attendance were:

- MAYOR:

MAYOR PRO TEM:

COUNCIL:

CITY MANAGER:

CITY CLERK:

OTHERS:
- Gerald A. Jones, Jr.

George W. Ballou

William F. Taylor

Demus L. Thompson

Harvey N. Walker

Diane C. Warrender

David Whitlow

Jeanne M. Giblin

Bernette Morris, Interim Police Chief; Jamie Fulk, Fire/EMS Chief; and Daniel Williams, Public Services Director

I. Call to Order

Mayor Jones opened the meeting at 10:10 a.m. and thanked all for being present. He stated the purpose of the meeting was to determine what the Council envisions Morehead City to be now and in the future in order to provide direction for City staff. The question is if the Council was satisfied with the way the City is operating or would the Council like to see changes. The ultimate goal is to provide better services to the citizens.

City Manager Whitlow stated that this session would focus on the transition of the Police Department due to the retirement of former Police Chief Wrenn Johnson; to receive an update on the merger of the Wildwood Fire/EMS Department; discussion of a Stormwater Plan for Morehead City, as toward the end of summer the City experienced problems with stormwater runoff that were beyond normal; and finally a discussion on the Webb Library and its future direction due to the impending departure of Sandy Bell on February 11<sup>th</sup>.

II. Morehead City Police Department -- Philosophy of Community Policing

Interim Police Chief Bernette Morris expressed her thoughts that community policing meant the Police Department working together with the community to solve problems. She stated that she wanted the Morehead City Police Department to work closer with other outside agencies and toward that end she has started to reach out to others, for instance the Carteret County Sheriff's Department and in fact the Morehead City Police Department has become part of the County Sheriff's Department Drug Task Force and Special Response Technical Team.

K-9 Division

Interim Police Chief Morris commented that the Department currently has three [3] dogs; a bomb sniffing dog and two [2] narcotics dogs. The bomb sniffing dog was received through a federal grant. The officer in charge of the bomb sniffing dog is mostly in the local schools with a student program he has developed. All the dogs are also used to track individuals and missing persons. Interim Police Chief Morris felt that one [1] narcotics dog would be sufficient. She spoke about the high costs of the maintenance and training of the animals in addition to the necessary hours of training for the handler. She recommended keeping one [1] narcotics dog and one [1] bomb sniffing dog. The extra narcotics dog could be sold, retired, donated, etc.

She stated her vision of policing would be more community oriented and getting resources to help the citizens. She spoke about her past and the help she received from the community. She envisions her police officers interacting with the community although she still understands that tickets need to be written and arrests need to be made. She sees Morehead City as a safe place to live and requested Council input on further direction.

Discussion ensued about how visitors view Morehead City and that even though tourism is a big part of the area economy, there is a necessity for upholding the law while building a rapport with the community.

Interim Police Chief Morris stated that there is a drug problem in Morehead City and that only one [1] officer is dedicated to narcotics fulltime. Her biggest concerns are drugs [which are mostly illegal pills] and shoplifting with Belks and Walmart being the largest targets.

Councilman Taylor was concerned with the duplication of services, for instance, animal control, and could not this be done by the county and also the Tactical Response Team, could not Morehead City piggyback with other agencies for these functions?

Councilman Ballou concurred that in many instances maybe these services could be shared with another agency.

The consensus of the Council was that wherever possible to have the Morehead City Police Department work with other agencies while continuing to provide the same level of high service; to make collaborative efforts and keep costs minimal.

### **Teen Court**

The Council concurred that the Teen Court was an integral part of the rapport between the community and the Police Department and should be maintained and supported. The Council also maintained that there should be continued support for the D.A.R.E. Program, the Mentoring Program and Summer Camp, etc., as these are important services and a part of community policing.

### **Dispatch Department**

Interim Police Chief Morris was of the opinion that the continued operation of both the City's Dispatch Department and the Carteret County E-911 Center was confusing and a safety issue.

Fire/EMS Chief Jamie Fulk concurred stating that City residents are using old phone numbers for emergency services which has caused some issues and that the two [2] dispatch systems cause confusion. The E-911 Center is also able to collect important data which is of help to the two [2] departments.

City Manager Whitlow offered that the consensus was not to continue use of the Morehead City Dispatch Center and to transition to use the County E-911 system.

Councilman Thompson expressed concern for the employees of the Dispatch Center.

Interim Police Chief Morris stated that the transition will not be an issue with the current employees and would be handled.

### **Certification**

City Manager Whitlow spoke about the Morehead City Police Department Certification administered by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, Inc. [CALEA] and that it is a costly process and the question of where or will it fit into the philosophy of community policing.

The Council questioned CALEA's value and asked for further clarification on the program.

Interim Police Chief Morris explained that it is a way for an outside agency to come in and tell if the Morehead City Police Department is doing its job correctly.

City Manager Whitlow stated that CALEA is helpful if you are an agency which is having problems as CALEA focuses on areas such as record keeping, emergency response, how to maintain evidence, etc., the organization is good for giving a framework.

Mayor Jones requested that the City Manager make a recommendation in the budget.

Councilman Thompson stated he would like the Police Department to go in a different direction than in the past.

Councilman Taylor mentioned the two [2] motorcycles in the Department and asked if they were necessary as the City should be looking at areas such as this for a cost savings.

Upon a question about updating the Records Department, Interim Police Chief Morris stated that the Records Department is very effective in terms of handling the paperwork.

***At 12:00 noon the Council broke for lunch and resumed the meeting at 12:30 p.m.***

### **III. Morehead City Fire/EMS**

#### **Wildwood Fire Department Merger**

City Manager Whitlow spoke about the transition of the Wildwood Fire Department into the Morehead City Fire/EMS Department. With this transition there is the expectation of a higher level of service as the Morehead City Department is a dual department providing both fire and EMS services. There is also a very strong commitment to mutual aid in Carteret County.

Fire/EMS Chief Fulk reported that the merger brought over eight [8] new employees from the Wildwood Fire Department which has worked very well. He confided that he had anticipated personnel issues, however, these have not ensued. He stated that the internet and phone services had to be updated as well as some demolition and furnishings of the building. He stated that the employees seem glad to have stability in their lives. With the addition of that area of Morehead City, the Fire/EMS Department has picked up approximately 1.94 more emergency calls a day. The Morehead City Fire/EMS Department also received some much needed equipment from the merger.

On a question of training for the new employees, Chief Fulk stated that they have two [2] years to get the necessary training and that the costs have been minimal to get them where they need to be for today. Approximately 28,000 people are under the protection of the Morehead City Fire/EMS Department with approximately 7,000 in the Wildwood area. However, there is an influx of approximately 50,000 people per day into Morehead City.

#### **ISO Rating**

Fire/EMS Chief Fulk stated that the Department is working toward the ISO inspection and rating. He explained how the ISO ratings are calculated and stated that the Department is working toward a 4/6 rating as applied to proximity of residences to fire hydrants and fire stations. He reminded the Council that the Morehead City Fire Department works with three [3] water distribution systems and that they have been training more with the Broad & Gales Creek, Beaufort, etc., Fire Departments in order to gain additional credit for the ISO. He spoke about the implementation of a water shuttle operation with the acquisition of the new tanker.

#### **Desired Level of Service and Staff Constraints**

Fire/EMS Chief Fulk spoke about staff constraints to maintain a desired level of service. He explained that a full staff is 13 people a day at all three [3] Fire/EMS stations not including command staff. This is sufficient until an employee is absent. At this point the City makes do with part-time staff, however, this means that the part-time staff needs uniforms, gear, training, a physical, etc., and cannot work more than 1,000 hours per year. Also, no one is sure how the Affordable Care Act will impact the part-time employee.

Last year there were over 1,100 overlapping calls which means many emergency calls coming in at the same time. To help cure this, Fire/EMS Chief Fulk suggested reducing the part-time employee budget by half; placing the money toward a full time position [\$70,000] and hire two [2] additional personnel thus allowing one [1] person per shift to fill in for absences. The part time roster stands at 30 individuals.

Volunteers at the Fire Station have declined in recent years. Everyone wants to be paid for their services. There is also the problem of volunteer requirements, certification and the fact that OSHA has become involved.

#### **Handling Non-Emergency Calls**

Fire/EMS Chief Fulk spoke about the high incidence of non-emergency calls. He offered that the City could respond to a call, assess the situation and offer other services which could help, such as provide a taxi voucher for transportation to a medical facility. This could enable staff to respond to true emergencies more quickly as it would lower the down time an ambulance and staff was assisting non-emergency calls.

City Manager Whitlow continued that Morehead City depends upon good mutual aid with our surrounding communities and that Morehead City is providing paramedic services for non-emergency situations.

Everyone feels they need an ambulance for the least emergency and that many of the calls are from “frequent flyers”. The question is how to encourage people to only call for true emergencies. Consideration has been given in non-emergency situations to defer the transport and provide a taxi token or other option.

The Council was concerned about the secondary service getting to the situation within a reasonable amount of time and Councilman Ballou had concerns about liability.

Upon a question from Councilman Taylor, Fire/EMS Chief Fulk explained that most of the collected ambulance fees are from Medicare and Medicaid.

#### **IV. Stormwater Management**

City Manager Whitlow explained that last fall the City experienced several storm events which left a foot of water across the north side of town and the sewer treatment plant was inundated. Water also came across Highway #70 near the Brandywine Subdivision. The problem is that many of the private ditches are not being maintained. The question is how to address this issue which would be a massive undertaking. Due to EPA [Environmental Protection Agency] laws, the City is dealing not only with quantity but quality issues also.

Mayor Jones stressed that the City needed a stormwater design plan and a policy to maintain the ditches. A lot of the problems are in the City’s ETJ [extra-territorial jurisdiction] area.

Public Services Director Daniel Williams stated that the City has begun to catalog every storm drain and catch basin as a way to know where they flow and to make sure that what the City owns is in good shape and that maintenance is being done on a regular basis. Water/sewer equipment is being used to clean out ditches and storm drains. The City also experiences a tide storm drainage system as well as CAMA [Coastal Area Management Act] limitations. He demonstrated on a map the topographical features, natural water flows and basins. He stated that the City will identify basic problems and begin there. DENR [Department of Natural Resources] will not allow any more outfalls; you can make them bigger, but you cannot add more. He continued that money will be placed in the budget for the upcoming year to start some of the process to have immediate relief. The City is working with the North Carolina Railroad [NCRR] and the North Carolina Department of Transportation [NCDOT] on the Brandywine situation.

Mayor Jones recommended the City consider implementing a funding source for a stormwater management program.

City Manager Whitlow explained that Stormwater Utilities come up with a unit measure called an equivalent residential unit and bases a charge on this.

The consensus of the Council to pursue an equitable charge system based on impervious coverage of property and to further pursue a stormwater management program.

#### **V. Webb Library**

City Manager Whitlow reported that the Head Librarian for the Webb Library, Sandy Bell, resigned effective February 11, 2015. It has been the desire to have the Webb Library be included with the Carteret Craven Pamlico Library System. The issue was having someone with a Library Science Degree in place. This decision will impact filing for the open position as there is the need to have someone with a MLS [Master of Library Science] or use the Carteret Craven Pamlico Library System for the required MLS Degree. There was a list of items which had to be

accomplished in order to become a part of the library system. Many of these items have been fulfilled.

It was the consensus of the Council to try to become a part of the Carteret Craven Pamlico Library System. The Manager will obtain more information on the process.

## **VI. Travel and Training Policy**

City Manager Whitlow stated that the Finance and Administration Committee has been working with public officials on a travel and training policy. This item will be on the Agenda for the March Council Meeting for consideration and adoption.

## **VII. Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

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Gerald A. Jones, Jr., Mayor

Attest:

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Jeanne M. Giblin, City Clerk